Teens

FROM A1

Lakewood mother Brandi McElhatten

Woodward says her 10-year-old daughter and friends are dealing well.

"She's doing fine, all things considered. I think she misses seeing her friends in person, but in this instance I'm grateful she's able to connect with them through technology. There is obviously some anxiety about everything going on, but this morning she was more excited about what was going on in ROBLOX. Kids are so adaptable and resilient. It's pretty amazing.

Orange mother Regina Eisenberg says her 11- and 13-year-olds are also adapting well, after some initial grumblings.

"We did not send them to school on Thursday. Not easy at first with the whining, but we stood our ground and they adjusted. We're keeping busy, doing projects and embracing it and they are following suit! No one is panicking, but we told them it's what we have to do for our friends, family and

She says her family, which has had to cancel several trips, is keeping busy: "Studying together (a little) and piano lessons on FaceTime, Skype for a teacher lesson, kids socializing on Facebook Messenger for cousins who don't have their own phones, Instagram, Houseparty.'

Still, it's an adjustment.

"I miss my friends a lot and I like to Face-Time with them. Cellphones help us connect and talk about our lives with friends," says daughter Sophie, 11. "It's challenging. We're connecting and staying in touch.

Her brother Max, 13, says he's keeping occupied with "video gaming, FaceTime & sleep ... and shooting hoops."

"Live gaming can provide a lot of social interaction," says educational consultant Moore. "Kids are there with three or four kids. Before, it was all about 'get off the gaming'; now it's 'go get in the game.' This will be a time when people really begin to evaluate

Strongsville seventh-grader Reagan Potoczak says she and her friends are making the best of staying home.

"I don't like being away from school because there is really nothing to do, but with my friends there is FaceTime and stuff. We've created group chats to help with homework, and with Snapchat you can send

pictures. (One friend) came up with idea of using Netflix Party, where you can all watch a movie at the same time."

Her 16-year-old brother, Ethan Potoczak, a junior at St. Ignatius High School, is facing a different set of issues. Social distancing is having a very real impact on major life milestones for older teenagers: School trips have been canceled, and prom and graduation ceremonies may soon follow.

A planned school trip to Ireland this June has not vet been canceled, but Potoczak is preparing for it to be called off.

"It's going to be really disappointing since this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I planned the whole first part of my summer around this," he says.

"I'm dealing with it by saying at the end of the day, this is what is best for me and everyone on the trip to prevent us getting or spreading the disease.'

Overall, he feels he and his friends are well-suited to deal with being housebound.

"We have grown up on the internet and with online technology," he says. "It's really more of a challenge for the teachers to figure out how to teach us. We basically live our life online already; it's not as much an adjust-

"My friends and I have a Discord (voicetext-gaming app platform) that we meet on daily to play games and connect - even before the virus, we were doing this. Now kids who were on it once a month are on daily."

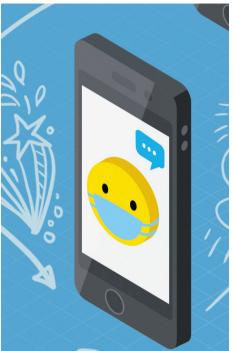
Elisa Nagy, a senior at Olmsted Falls High School, turned 18 this week.

"My eighteenth birthday was on the 17th, and I couldn't see any of my friends or extended family," she says. "It crushed my heart. I will never forget that day as long as I live, but I also won't forget how many people are being saved by my not leaving the house."

A senior trip to Mexico has been canceled. Prom and graduation are still on, for now.

"Everything after April 6th is supposed to continue as normal. I'm sure this will change as we get closer to the peak of this pandemic, but for now they're giving us hope," she says. "I know that myself as well as my peers are very concerned with walking at graduation, so we are trying to comply and make this better as quick as we can.

'Some of my friends are doing very well at quarantining themselves, as they want to



every right to be really sad about these losses and be empathetic, and not try to minimize how they feel and guilt them into not being upset. They are feeling upset, and we should not underestimate how they feel."

The children most at risk, she adds, are those who were previously having negative social media experiences.

"More of my concern now is for kids for whom social channels — before they were isolated from their peers — for kids who were using those channels in ways that didn't make things better or exaggerated bad situations.

"We worry they will have fewer ways to practice positive interpersonal skills and more time to do things that don't work well."

Getting your teen outside in a monitored situation with social distancing might be one way to deal with this, she suggests.

Moore suggests family board games, giving your child a cooking challenge or other non-technology-related task and using online resources for virtual extracurricular classes, science projects, Lego challenges and other educational stress relievers.

"You've got to be creative at home as a par-

Perhaps parents can even learn a thing or two from their tech-savvy kids not necessarily about FaceTime fashion shows or sleepovers, but about staying connected.

be a part of the solution," she adds, "Others, though, aren't taking this seriously enough and are active contributors to the problem. Every day my friend group has at least 15 minutes of group FaceTime or video chat so we can try to make things semi-normal. We have all been encouraging each other to keep doing the right things, although there are temptations."

Psychologist Damour says it's important to acknowledge the grief teens missing milestones may be feeling.

ent," she says.

Perhaps parents can even learn a thing or two from their tech-savvy kids - not necessarily about FaceTime fashion shows or sleepovers, but about staying connected.

"It's a swing," says Damour. "Now a lot of adults will be looking to their social networks for connections. That's the thing about social media — it can be used for good or bad.

"The beauty of kids and teenagers is they are wildly creative and more adaptable in



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